

UNCLASSIFIED

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DCM:JABUSHNELL, DAO:LCONWELL, MILGP:MLOPEZ
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AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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SUBJ: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ALFONSIN GOVERNMENT AND THE
ARMED FORCES

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1. SUMMARY: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ALFONSIN GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMED FORCES APPEAR TO BE BETTER THAN PRE-INAUGURATION DOOMSAYERS PREDICTED, BUT THEY ARE FAR FROM TROUBLE-FREE. THE ARMED SERVICES APPEAR TO ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE OF PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP AND ALFONSIN RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR CAUTION IN INTERFERING IN MILITARY AFFAIRS IF HE IS TO AVOID ERODING THAT ACCEPTANCE. THE OFFICER CORPS SEEMS WILLING TO FACE LIMITED BUDGET CUTS, SOME REORGANIZATION, AND THE PUNISHMENT OF THE MOST CORRUPT AND EGREGIOUS VIOLATORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE LAST REGIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE KIND OF MAJOR RESTRUCTURING AND TO-THE-BONE CUTS IN THE BUDGET OF THE ARMED FORCES REPORTEDLY PLANNED BY THE GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO BE RESISTED IN THE LONG RUN. MOREOVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT A BROAD SPECTRUM OF MILITARY OFFICERS IS UNEASY ABOUT THE DRIFT OF HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS AND DISGRUNTLED ABOUT THE SOILING OF THE ARMED FORCES BY SOME JUDGES AND MEDIA MUCKRACKERS. UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT ACTS SOON ON SENIOR OFFICER PROMOTIONS, MILITARY MORALE MAY FURTHER SUFFER. ALFONSIN AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE RAUL BORRAS ARE NOT INDIFFERENT TO MILITARY CARES. ALTHOUGH THEY DEMONSTRATE THEY WILL REACT SHARPLY TO CHALLENGES TO THEIR AUTHORITY, THEY ARE AWARE OF THE NEED TO STROKE THE ARMED FORCES AND TO COMPROMISE WITH THEM SINCE, AS BORRAS SAID PUBLICLY "BRINGING THE MILITARY UNDER CIVILIAN CONTROL" CANNOT BE ACCOMPLISHED "IN A SIX-YEAR ADMINISTRATION." END SUMMARY.

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OMINOUS FOREBODINGS FAIL TO MATERIALIZE

2. [REDACTED] THE INAUGURATION OF ALFONSIN DECEMBER 10 WAS RECEIVED WITH CONSIDERABLE FOREBODING BY THE MILITARY. THEY HAD FRESH IN MEMORY HIS ANTI-MILITARY CAMPAIGN RHETORIC, PROMISES TO SLASH THE MILITARY BUDGET AND REORGANIZE THE ARMED FORCES, HIS CREDENTIALS AS A LEGAL COUNSEL TO DETAINED PERSONS SUSPECTED OF SUBVERSION, AND HIS ROLE AS FOUNDER OF THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. ALFONSIN'S MOST VIGOROUS SUPPORTERS CAME FROM THE LEFT WING OF THE RADICAL PARTY, PARTICULARLY THE STRIDENTLY ANTI-MILITARY YOUTH ARM KNOWN AS "FRANJA MORADA" (PURPLE STRIPE).

3. [REDACTED] MANY IN THE OFFICER CORPS DISBELIEVED PRESIDENTIAL PROMISES THAT ONLY THE ARMED FORCES' LEADERSHIP AND THE MOST EGREGIOUS VIOLATORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE. SOME FEARED MASSIVE RETIREMENTS. EVEN THOSE WHO DISMISSED RIGHT-WING PROPAGANDA THAT ALFONSIN IS A TOOL OF THE LEFT HARBORED DOUBTS THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE MORE RADICALIZED ELEMENTS OF HIS MOVEMENT. IN SHORT, THE MILITARY WERE BRACED FOR SIEGE.

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[REDACTED]

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4. [REDACTED] ALFONSIN WORKS AT DIFFUSING SOME OF THE MILITARY'S ANXIETIES. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, RETIREMENTS RESULTING FROM EXECUTIVE BRANCH DECISIONS AFFECTED ONLY FLAG RANK OFFICERS. WE UNDERSTAND THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO GIVE THE SERVICES ACCEPTABLE BUDGETS AT LEAST FOR 1984. THE PRESIDENT EXPENDED POLITICAL CAPITAL IN OBTAINING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE THAT IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT THOSE WHO FOLLOWED ORDERS (BUENOS AIRES 857). WHILE ORDERING THE TRIAL OF NINE FORMER JUNTA MEMBERS, ALFONSIN ALSO ORDERED THE DETENTION AND TRIAL OF TERRORISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS SUCH AS RICARDO OBREGON CANO, OSCAR BIDEAIN, MARIO FIRMINICH AND FERNANDO VACA NARVAJA, AMONG OTHERS, DEMONSTRATING A WELCOME EVENHANDEDNESS (BUENOS AIRES 0321). HIS CRITICISM OF THE MOTHERS AND OTHERS WHO CALL FOR "POPULAR JUSTICE" WAS WELL RECEIVED IN UNIFORMED RANKS (BUENOS AIRES 0519). IT APPEARS THE PRESIDENT RESPECTS PROFESSIONALISM AND ESCHEWS POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN MILITARY ASSIGNMENTS AND PROMOTIONS. (ALFONSIN'S CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY, TO NAME JUST ONE, WAS CLOSE TO THE PERONISTS AND CONSIDERED THEIR CHOICE FOR THAT POSITION; MANY SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE AIR FORCE HAVE WELL-KNOWN PERONIST SYMPATHIES.)

[REDACTED]

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5. [REDACTED] NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF AREAS WHERE FRICTIONS CAN DEVELOP EASILY. THE MOST SENSITIVE CONTINUES TO BE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE PAST.

UNEASE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

6. [REDACTED] MOST MILITARY OFFICERS WERE INVOLVED TO SOME DEGREE IN THE STRUGGLE TO PUT DOWN SUBVERSION INCLUDING ITS VIOLENT ASPECTS. THE DELIBERATE POLICY OF THE ARMED FORCES DURING THE PEAK PERIOD OF THE STRUGGLE, 1975-1978, WAS TO ENSURE THAT THE BULK OF THE OFFICER CORPS, AND NONCOMS AS WELL, PARTICIPATED IN ANTI-SUBVERSIVE OPERATIONS. ACCORDING TO A SOURCE WHO WAS VERY CLOSE TO THE DECISION-MAKERS AT THE TIME, THE OBJECTIVE WAS TWO-FOLD: TO PREVENT THE EMERGENCE OF AN ELITE BODY OF SOLDIERS WITH COMBAT EXPERIENCE AND TO COMPROMISE THE ENTIRE INSTITUTION IN WHAT THE LEADERSHIP RECOGNIZED WERE METHODS THAT SUBSEQUENTLY MIGHT BE QUESTIONED.

7. [REDACTED] MANY MILITARY OFFICERS AND NONCOMS, WE ARE TOLD, ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE COURSE OF INVESTIGATIONS BEING CARRIED OUT BY JUDGES, BY THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON DISAPPEARED PERSONS (THE SO-CALLED SABATO COMMISSION, AFTER ITS CHAIRMAN, ERNESTO SABATO), AND BY THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE ARMED FORCES, WHICH, LIKE THE SABATO COMMISSION, HAS UNTIL MARCH 23 TO RECEIVE EVIDENCE REGARDING DISAPPEARANCES OR OTHER ABUSES. THE CHARGES AGAINST MILITARY OFFICERS RANGE FROM ILLEGAL DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY AND CONCEALMENT OF CRIMES TO TORTURE AND MURDER. FEW OBSERVERS EXPECT MANY PEOPLE TO BE FOUND GUILTY OF TORTURE AND MURDER, FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS RELATIVELY EASY TO PROVE ILLEGAL DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY AND COVER-UPS AND THIS IS THE FOCUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS AND ZEALOUS JUDGES. TO WIT, THE ACTIVISTS ARE CONCENTRATING THEIR EFFORTS ON COLLECTING EVIDENCE RELATED TO INVOLVEMENT WITH CLANDESTINE DETENTION CENTERS ("OLIMPO," "LA PERLA") AND THE DETENTION OF PEOPLE AT THE NAVAL MECHANICS SCHOOL AND OTHER MILITARY BASES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THOSE CONVICTED OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ILLEGAL DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY (I.E., KIDNAPPING) FOR MORE THAN 30 DAYS COULD BE SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS' IMPRISONMENT.

[REDACTED]

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8. [REDACTED] THE CONCERN OF SOME MILITARY OFFICERS IS THAT MANY CASES WILL END UP IN CIVIL COURTS AND THAT JUDGES WILL IGNORE THE PROVISION OF THE CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE THAT RELIEVES SUBORDINATES OF MOST RESPONSIBILITY. AT LEAST FOUR JUDGES, IN BUENOS AIRES, LA PAMPA, TUCUMAN AND SALTA, ARE PURSUING WITH GREAT VIGOR DISAPPEARANCE CASES CHARGED TO MIDDLE- AND LOW-RANKING OFFICERS. ONE OF THESE JUDGES EVEN DECLARED THE NEW CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE UNCONSTITUTIONAL. ANOTHER HOLDOVER JUDGE HAS ORDERED THE DETENTION OF NONE OTHER THAN ALFONSIN'S MILITARY AIDE DE CAMP, LTC GREPPI, AN ACTION WHICH SOME OBSERVERS ALLEGE IS AN ATTEMPT TO EMBARRASS THE PRESIDENT.

9. [REDACTED] COMPLICATING THE COURT PICTURE, PERONIST SENATOR VICENTE LEONIDAS SAADI, WHO IS VERY FAR LEFT, AND DDWH**CONTROLS THE SENATE COMMITTEE WHICH MANAGES THE PROCESS BY WHICH JUDGES ARE CONFIRMED. ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE RADICAL PARTY SOURCE IN THE SENATE, SAADI IS VETOING MANY EXECUTIVE BRANCH NOMINATIONS AND ATTEMPTING TO APPOINT A NUMBER OF LEFT-WING JUDGES WHO, THE RADICALS ARE CONVINCED, WILL TRY TO SAVAGE THE MILITARY ON HUMAN RIGHTS CASES. IT IS SAADI'S INTENTION, THE RADICALS SAY, TO SIMULTANEOUSLY DISCREDIT THE MILITARY AND PROVOKE A MILITARY-GOVERNMENT CONFRONTATION.

10. [REDACTED] THE GOVERNMENT HAS MANY INSTRUMENTS AT ITS DISPOSAL TO TRY TO ENSURE THAT SUBORDINATES ARE PROTECTED. SUBTLE PRESSURE CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR. MOREOVER, IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT JUDGES WHO IGNORE THE NEW CODE WILL EVENTUALLY BE OVERRULED BY HIGHER COURTS--THE SUPREME COURT WAS APPOINTED BY ALFONSIN. HOWEVER, THE IDEA THAT JUDGES WILL ATTEMPT TO THROW THE BOOK AT MILITARY PERSONNEL REGARDLESS OF RANK IS UNNERVING TO MANY OF THEM.

OTHER MILITARY PREOCCUPATIONS

11. [REDACTED] SINCE THE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, REVELATIONS ABOUT UNIDENTIFIED BODIES UNCOVERED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, TORTURE CENTERS, CORRUPTION AND OTHER ABUSES EXACERBATED ANTI-MILITARY SENTIMENT IN THE POPULACE. THE PRESS IS FULL OF ABUSE HURLED AT THE MILITARY AND BLAMES THEM FOR VIRTUALLY EVERY ILL THAT AFFLICTS THE NATION. THE GENERAL POPULACE, PARTICULARLY YOUTH, IS NOW UNINHIBITED IN MANIFESTING ITS REVULSION OF THE MILITARY. SENIOR OFFICERS WERE SUBJECTED TO TAUNTS AND HOSTILE CROWDS OUTSIDE COURTHOUSES, ALL OF WHICH HAS RECEIVED HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE.

12. [REDACTED] MILITARY OFFICERS ARE DEFENSIVE--THEY DO NOT WEAR THEIR UNIFORMS IN PUBLIC UNLESS THEY HAVE TO, FOR EXAMPLE--AND THEY PRIVATELY SEETHE. FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW, ALL ARE BEING CONDEMNED FOR THE EXCESSES OF A FEW AND IT IS FORGOTTEN THAT THEY PERFORMED A SERVICE TO THE NATION--STAMPING OUT TERRORISM--IN WHICH THEY RISKED THEIR LIVES. THE ARREST AND/OR COURT INTERROGATIONS OF OFFICERS WHOM THEY CONSIDERED ABOVE REPROACH, SUCH AS EX-PRESIDENTS VIDELA AND BIGNONE, LIEUTENANT COLONEL SEINELDIN AND THE PRESIDENT'S AIDE IS FOR MANY AN AFFRONT TO THE ENTIRE MILITARY INSTITUTION, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE JUDGES REVEAL DETAILS OF THE CHARGES AGAINST OFFICERS. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT MANY CIVILIANS ALSO SHARE THESE VIEWS. THE SUPREME COURT RECENTLY ISSUED A WARNING TO JUDGES TO REFRAIN FROM MAKING PRESS STATEMENTS, AND THE GOVERNMENT QUIETLY MOVED THE VENUE FOR INTERROGATIONS TO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN ORDER TO AVOID THE HOSTILE CROWDS AND THE MEDIA AT COURTROOMS. HOWEVER, THE MEDIA CONTINUES TO SENSATIONALIZE NEW REVELATIONS, AND THE MILITARY ARE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO A FREE-WHEELING PRESS. ALFONSIN'S FIRST SIGN OF MILITARY UNREST ON THIS SCORE WAS IN JANUARY WHEN FIFTH CORPS COMMANDER GENERAL AGUADO BENITEZ DEFENDED NOTORIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATOR RETIRED GENERAL RAMON CAMPS. AGUADO BENITEZ WAS REPRI-MANDED BUT NOT REMOVED FROM HIS COMMAND.

13. [REDACTED] ANOTHER SORE POINT IS THE DELAY OF THE GOVERNMENT IN FORWARDING RECOMMENDATIONS ON SENIOR OFFICER PROMOTIONS TO THE SENATE. A DELAY IN SENIOR PROMOTIONS UNSETTLES THE ENTIRE INSTITUTION BECAUSE NO ONE KNOWS WHO MAY BE HIS NEW BOSS (ALL REASSIGNMENTS GENERALLY TAKE PLACE IN JANUARY) NOR WHAT THEIR MARCHING ORDERS WILL BE. THUS, MOST ACTIVITY IS HELD IN SUSPENSE AND MANY OFFICERS HAVE VIRTUALLY NOTHING TO DO, A MORALE PROBLEM. THE GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED ABOUT PROBABLE REJECTIONS OF CERTAIN OFFICERS ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS IF IT FORWARDS THE LIST NOW AND WANTS TO COMPLETE THE WORK ON JUDGES BEFORE OPENING THE MILITARY PROMOTIONS FRONT IN THE SENATE. SOME SENIOR OFFICERS UNDERSTAND THAT THE DELAY IS IN THEIR PERSONAL INTEREST AND BETTER FOR THE INSTITUTION. NEVERTHELESS, PROLONGED DELAY CAN BECOME A SOURCE OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE GOA AND THE MILITARY.

[REDACTED]

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14. [REDACTED] ANOTHER IRRITANT IS UNFORESEEN FINANCIAL DELAYS. FOR EXAMPLE, CONSCRIPTS HAVE BEEN CALLED UP (ALTHOUGH FEWER THAN PREVIOUSLY), BUT THE GOVERNMENT (MINISTRY OF ECONOMY) HAS NOT RELEASED FUNDS TO PAY FOR BASICS SUCH AS FOOD, AND SUPPLIERS ARE THREATENING TO STOP DELIVERIES, ACCORDING TO DAO SOURCES.

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CIVILIAN CONTROL AND ARMED FORCES RESTRUCTURING

15. [REDACTED] THE FOREGOING PROBLEMS OF MILITARY UNEASE FORM THE BACKDROP TO WHAT ALFONSIN CONSIDERED HIS HIGHEST PRIORITY AND MOST DIFFICULT CHALLENGE: ESTABLISHING GENUINE CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE ARMED FORCES. FORTUNATELY, THE NEW PRESIDENT EVIDENTLY REALIZES THAT THIS IS AN ARDUOUS AND GRADUAL PROCESS, REQUIRING GREAT FLEXIBILITY. BORRAS NOTED RECENTLY THAT "BRINGING THE MILITARY UNDER CIVILIAN CONTROL IS AN IMMENSE TASK AND PERHAPS TOO MUCH TO ACCOMPLISH EVEN IN A SIX-YEAR ADMINISTRATION."

[REDACTED]

16. [REDACTED] ALFONSIN AND HIS DEFENSE MINISTER MADE SOME PROGRESS. UNDER RECENTLY PROMULGATED DECREE LAW 436 THEY HAVE MORE INPUT THAN CIVILIAN PREDECESSORS SINCE THE 1920'S INTO THE MILITARY PERSONNEL SYSTEM REGARDING THE ASSIGNMENT, PROMOTION AND RETIREMENT OF COLONELS AND FLAG OFFICERS. THEY TRANSFERRED THE MILITARY FACTORIES SYSTEM TO THE CIVILIAN CONTROLLED MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. WITH CONGRESS, THEY CONTROL THE MILITARY BUDGET. THEY HAVE INSERTED THE JOINT STAFF IN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND STRUCTURE AND ARE TRYING TO FORCE MORE COOPERATION AMONG THE THREE SERVICES WHICH HAVE LONG BEEN BITTER RIVALS. THEY HOPE TO INTEGRATE ARMED FORCES PLANNING, CREATE A JOINT OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY AND ESTABLISH A JOINT LOGISTICAL SYSTEM. ALTHOUGH THE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT STAFF ARE THE CHIEFS OF STAFF (HIGHEST RANKING OFFICERS) OF THE THREE SERVICES, AS IN THE U.S., AND THE GOA WOULD LIKE THE JOINT STAFF TO BE IN DIRECT LINE OF AUTHORITY FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ABOVE TO THE THREE ARMED SERVICES BELOW, THIS STRUCTURE IS A NEW ONE FOR ARGENTINA AND WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED EASILY. RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING TO IMPOSE THESE CHANGES AGAINST THE WILL OF THE MILITARY, ALFONSIN AND BORRAS ARE TRYING TO GAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE AND CONVINCE THEM.

[REDACTED]

17. [REDACTED] NEVERTHELESS, SUCH FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN MILITARY ORGANIZATION AND MODE OF OPERATIONS AFFECT VESTED INTERESTS AND RAISE CONCERNS AMONG SOME THAT, AS IN THE PAST, THEY COULD BE SMOKESCREENS FOR ULTERIOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, LIKE THOSE OF JUAN PERON IN THE 1940'S.

[REDACTED]

18. [REDACTED] THE SIMARI INCIDENT ILLUSTRATES THE SENSITIVITY TO RESTRUCTURING AND THE FORCE OF SERVICE RIVALRY. AIR FORCE BRIGADIER SIMARI, IN A HEATED DISCUSSION WITH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT STAFF, ARMY GENERAL JULIO FERNANDEZ TORRES, OBJECTED TO THE SIZE OF THE BUDGET ALLOCATED TO THE AIR FORCE AND QUESTIONED THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT STAFF OVER THE THREE MILITARY SERVICES. IN SIMARI'S VIEW, UNDOUBTEDLY SHARED BY HIS AIR FORCE COLLEAGUES AND PROBABLY MANY IN THE NAVY AND ARMY, EACH SERVICE IS VIRTUALLY AUTONOMOUS AND ITS COMMANDER IS THE SERVICE CHIEF OF STAFF. SIMARI'S ATTITUDE WAS BELATEDLY PERCEIVED BY DEFENSE MINISTER BORRAS AND THE PRESIDENT AS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO ALFONSIN'S AUTHORITY AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF; ONCE THE ISSUE WAS UNDERSTOOD, THE PRESIDENT ORDERED SIMARI'S RETIREMENT. SUBSEQUENTLY, SIMARI PUBLICLY ELABORATED ON HIS VIEWS, AGAIN QUESTIONING THE AUTHORITY OF THE JOINT STAFF AND BY EXTENSION THE PRESIDENT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME HURLING GRATUITIOUS INSULTS AT THE OTHER TWO ARMED SERVICES AND THE JOINT STAFF CHAIRMAN. SIMARI WAS PLACED UNDER ARREST BY DIRECTION OF THE AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF.

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19. [REDACTED] SOME OBSERVERS COMMENT THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTER SUFFERED THE APPEARANCE OF BEING TOO UNDECISIVE TO RUN THE MILITARY, WHO EXPECT STRONG LEADERSHIP FROM THOSE WHO ARE IN COMMAND. IT DOES NOT SEEM THAT THE PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY SUFFERED, HOWEVER, IN PART BECAUSE HIS SURPRISINGLY TOUGH ACTIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS TERM (COURTS MARTIAL OF NINE JUNTA MEMBERS, THREE OF WHOM ARE UNDER DETENTION; PROHIBITIONS ON LEAVING THE COUNTRY AGAINST TWENTY EX-MILITARY HIGH OFFICIALS) BUILT A CONSIDERABLE RESERVOIR OF RESPECT.

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20. [REDACTED] INTER-SERVICE RIVALRY, NOW EXACERBATED BY RECRIMINATIONS OVER THE FALKLANDS DEBACLE, IS NOTHING NEW. SIMARI PROBABLY SPOKE THE FEELINGS OF MOST OF THE AIR FORCE WHEN HE ACCUSED MEMBERS OF THE OTHER SERVICES OF COWARDICE AND INCOMPETENCE. ARMY-NAVY MUTUAL DISTRUST IS NEARLY AS PASSIONATE. WE SUSPECT IT WILL TAKE A LONG TIME BEFORE THE SERVICES AGREE TO WORK TOGETHER IN ANY REAL SENSE. THIS ANIMOSITY WILL PROBABLY DELAY ANY REAL UNIFICATION OF THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES.

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21. [REDACTED] ALTHOUGH THE SIMARI CHALLENGE TO PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP RESULTED IN A VICTORY FOR ALFONSIN, THE GOVERNMENT FOUND IT NECESSARY TO COMPROMISE ON OTHER MILITARY ISSUES AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT TERM. THE MINISTER HOPED TO ESTABLISH A CENTRALIZED OFFICE TO MANAGE ACQUISITIONS FROM FOREIGN MILITARY SOURCES. THE ARMED FORCES OPPOSED THIS INITIATIVE AND, AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, EACH SERVICE IS ATTEMPTING TO PURSUE ITS OWN ACQUISITIONS AUTONOMOUSLY. THE ARMED SERVICES REPORTEDLY IGNORED REQUESTS BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TO DELIVER LISTS OF FACULTY MEMBERS AND THE CONTENTS OF CURRICULA AT THE VARIOUS MILITARY TRAINING INSTITUTES, SHOWING THEIR DISDAIN FOR GOVERNMENT PLANS TO REFORM THE MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEM, ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDED IN DELAYING COMMENCEMENT OF CLASSES. IGLESIAS ROUCO, COLUMNIST FOR THE DAILY "LA PRENSA" CLAIMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BACKED OFF ON PLANS TO PRIVATIZE SEGMENTS OF THE MILITARY-RUN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, "MILITARY FACTORIES." MOREOVER WE UNDERSTAND FROM A FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE THAT THE ARMED SERVICES HAVE OBTAINED WHAT THEY WANT ON SEVERAL OTHER ISSUES DESPITE OPPOSITION FROM IMPORTANT CIVILIANS IN THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

[REDACTED]

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22. [REDACTED] THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY SHARE ANOTHER IMPEDIMENT TO DEVELOPING A STABLE RELATIONSHIP: DIFFERENCES IN STYLE. THE MILITARY ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THE COMPLICATED PLAY OF VARIED AND SUBTLE POLITICAL FACTORS THAT USUALLY REQUIRE CONCESSIONS AND CONTRADICTORY BEHAVIOR. THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO RECEIVING UNCOMPLICATED ORDERS AND CARRYING THEM OUT, IN RETURN FOR WHICH THEY EXPECT LOYALTY FROM ABOVE, MEANING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CONTINUOUS ATTENTION TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND SENSITIVITY TO MILITARY CONCERNS. FOR THEIR PART, MOST UCR POLITICIANS, ALTHOUGH NOT ALFONSIN, TEND TO FORGET HOW THIN-SKINNED THE MILITARY ARE. THUS THREE WEEKS AGO THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE HIMSELF LET SLIP TO THE PRESS THE COMMENT THAT "PERHAPS THE MILITARY TODAY LACK THE EQUANIMITY AND CAPACITY TO JUDGE THEMSELVES" ON DIRTY WAR EXCESSES, A REMARK WHICH THE MILITARY FOUND OFFENSIVE AND TROUBLING.

[REDACTED]

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23. [REDACTED] IN MARCH THE PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE LAUNCHED AN EFFORT TO GAIN THE MILITARY'S CONFIDENCE. BORRAS ACCELERATED HIS SCHEDULE OF VISITS TO MILITARY BASES AND, IN MID-MARCH, ADDED OTHER RANKING CIVILIANS TO HIS DELEGATION. THE PRESIDENT HAS MET WITH THE MILITARY CHIEFS FROM TIME TO TIME, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY NOT ENOUGH. THE PRESIDENT VIEWED A JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE IN CORDOBA ON MARCH 15, AND GAVE ONE OF HIS MOST IMPORTANT AND CAREFULLY PREPARED SPEECHES SINCE THE INAUGURATION ON MARCH 16 TO AN AUDIENCE WHICH INCLUDED SEVERAL SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS. DURING THE ADDRESS TO COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF SAN MARTIN'S MOUNTED GRENADIERS, ALFONSIN MADE AN ABOUT-FACE FROM HIS ANTI-MILITARY RHETORIC OF THE CAMPAIGN, CALLING ON THE ARMED FORCES TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN A PROGRAM OF DEMOCRATIC, NATIONAL AND POPULAR RECONSTRUCTION, WHICH, HE REMINDED THEM, REQUIRES DISCIPLINE, LOYALTY TO THE CONSTITUTION AND THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, AND NONINVOLVEMENT IN PARTISAN POLITICS. THE REACTION OF THE MILITARY WAS QUITE POSITIVE. HE HAS NOW PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED THAT THE ARMED FORCES ARE HIS OWN ARMED FORCES. IN DOING SO, OF COURSE, HE HAS CAST OFF SOME OF HIS LINES TO THE LEFT, INCLUDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS. FINALLY, ALFONSIN PROBABLY UNDERSTANDS THE MILITARY SINCE HE STUDIED AT THE NATION'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS MILITARY SECONDARY SCHOOL.

[REDACTED]

24. [REDACTED] IN SUM, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY ARE IN FLUX, BUT NOT BAD. NEVERTHELESS, THEY WILL REQUIRE CONSTANT ATTENTION, AND COULD COST THE PRESIDENT POPULAR SUPPORT. THE PRESIDENT HAS CLEAR IDEAS OF THE DIRECTIONS HE WANTS TO GO, BUT HE IS MOVING CAUTIOUSLY AND IS PREPARED TO COMPROMISE WHEN STRONG RESISTANCE EMERGES TO HIS GOVERNMENT'S PREFERENCES, BUT NOT ITS AUTHORITY. THE MILITARY'S WORST FEARS ABOUT ALFONSIN HAVE PROVEN TO BE UNWARRANTED, AT LEAST UNTIL NOW, BUT CONCERNS REMAIN REGARDING SEVERAL ISSUES, ABOVE ALL MILITARY RESTRUCTURING AND ACCOUNTING FOR THE PAST, WHICH IS NOT ENTIRELY UNDER THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH'S CONTROL. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE SUFFERS FROM INEXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH THE ARMED SERVICES AND PROBABLY WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME ACCOMPLISHING ITS OBJECTIVES WITHOUT CAUSING FRICTIONS IN RELATIONS WITH THEM. ORTIZ##